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THE PAPER PULPIT

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How the Bible Authorizes

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By Direct Statement

At first glance, this may seem to be the simplest of all the ways in which the Bible authorizes. After all, if the Bible says that a thing is so, then it is so, right? Well, it must be acknowledged that not every direct, propositional statement in the Bible is binding upon us today.

One must take into consideration, who made the direct statement in question.

In John 9:34, Jewish authorities said that a man whom the Lord had healed was born in sin. Their statement may have been quite direct, but that does not mean it was accurate. Ezekiel 18:20

makes it clear that people are not born in sin, but are responsible only for the sins they commit in their lifetimes. Direct statements like those in John 9:34 cannot be used as evidence to teach what the Bible clearly denies.

In order for a direct statement to bear authority, it must come from one who possesses divine authority. In Matthew 17:5, God, the Father said, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*" This is a simple, declarative statement, which establishes that God wants us listen to what Jesus has to say.

Since it came from the Father, Himself, there can be no doubt about the weight of its authority. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" This is a simple, declarative statement, which establishes that baptism is absolutely essential for the salvation of every soul. Since it came from the Lord, Himself, there can be no doubt about the weight of its authority.

Another source of divine authority is found in the words of those who were

inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak and write. In declarative statements made by the apostles and by others who were under the influence of inspiration, we find that there is an abundance of

Biblical authority. As the process is described in 2 Peter 1:21, "*holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*" That is why Peter's declaration about baptism for the remission of sins in Acts 2:38, Philip's declaration about the confession of faith in Christ in Acts 8:37 and Paul's declaration about the need for all men to repent in Acts 17:30 are considered to be absolutely authoritative.

This is not an issue that is too complicated for us to understand. When it comes to ascertaining Bible authority, a little common sense goes a long way!

***"He that believeth
and is baptized shall
be saved..."***

—Mark 16:16



Quotable Quotations

“It is true that there are many ‘direct statements’ in the Bible which we do not use in seeking to establish Bible authority in relationship to our obligations. But, the fact remains that there ARE direct statements which are used to set forth Bible authority.”

—Roy C. Deaver

“Clearly, it has been established that in order to determine whether an account of action is binding on men today, it is necessary to reason logically about: (a) the specific account of action itself, (b) the immediate context, (c) the remote context, and (d) the total context...”

—Thomas B. Warren

“Inference deals with correct reasoning, but correct reasoning (in this context) with regard to what God has implied...And the authority inherent in that which is implied lies not in the fact that I have reasoned correctly with regard to an explicit statement, but in the fact that GOD HAS IMPLIED IT!

—Roy C. Deaver

By Approved Example

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us and example, that ye should follow his steps:”

—1 Peter 2:21

What makes an example an *approved* example? There are a number of examples of tradition and practice in the New Testament, some of which are imitated by the modern church and some of which are not. How can we know which examples we ought to imitate and which we ought not?

For one thing, we must understand the difference between actions which are determined by local custom and tradition and actions which are part of the regular practice of religion. Jesus showed His disciples how to partake of

the Lord’s Supper and then encouraged them to do so on a regular basis (Luke 22:19,20). It is an example that the Lord intended for Christians to imitate on a regular basis (1 Cor. 11:24,25). This, obviously, is what we would call an *approved* example.

In John 13:1 through 17, we find that, on the same evening that Jesus instituted His Supper, He also washed His disciples’ feet. Jesus did for His disciples what would have been the job of the lowest ranking servant in any house. He made the point to His disciples that they all must be willing to serve one an-

other, if they desire to be “great” in the kingdom of Heaven. When Jesus said, “*For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you*” (vs. 15), He was not instructing them to make the washing of feet a part of their worship, like the Lord’s Supper. Instead, He was calling upon His disciples to follow His example of selfless service (1 Pet. 2:21).

Understanding the difference between practices that were customary and practices that were part of a regular pattern of divinely authorized religious exercise is essential!

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By Necessary Inference

What about those things with which the Bible does not deal directly? How can we know that it is sinful for Christians to smoke cigarettes, or abuse drugs like morphine, when such things did not exist in the first century and are not mentioned in the Bible? In order to know what the will of God is, when there is no direct statement or approved example to settle the matter, we must turn to necessary inference.

Necessary inference is a conclusion that is demanded by the available evidence. For example, there is no verse in the New Testament, which says, "Thou shalt not smoke cigarettes," but there is a verse which says, "*All things*

are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12). Put that verse together with First Corinthians 6:19 and 20, and you can argue that smoking is sinful, because it is an addictive habit that destroys the body. The same argument could be applied to the abuse of alcohol, morphine and other drugs.

This is where the application of logic comes into play in our study of the Bible. God is a rational being and He deals with humanity in a rational way (Isa. 1:18). It may not always be easy to understand the Lord's logic, because it is so much more complex than man's (Isa. 55:8,9). But God, who created the human mind,

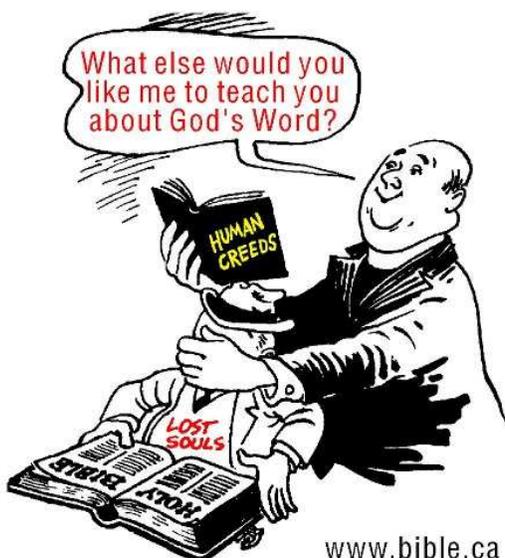
is perfectly capable of communicating His will to humanity in a way that is logical, straightforward and within the grasp of our understanding (Eph. 3:4).

The thing about necessary inference is that it is a conclusion, which is *demand*ed by the available evidence. It is not a conclusion, which is contradicted by the available evidence. That is the kind of logic employed by false teachers (Mark 7:7). Every teaching and practice that is done in the name of religion must have authority from the Bible to back it up (Col. 3:17). Whether it is a direct statement, or an approved example, or necessary inference, there must be **Bible** authority for what we teach and practice!

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

—Colossians 3:17

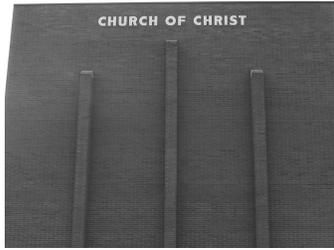
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www.bible.ca (John 12:48).

LIES Men Have Told About the Bible

1. Common people can't understand the Bible; they need the clergy to explain it to them (Mark 12:37b).
2. Only part of the Bible is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16).
3. The Bible is not complete; we need creeds and confessions of faith to supplement it (2 Pet. 1:3).
4. The Bible is not supposed to be a pattern by which we are meant to live our lives (2 Tim. 1:13).
5. We will not be judged by the words of the Bible



Madisonville Church of Christ

Sunday Morning Bible Study

—9:30 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship

—10:30 a.m.

Sunday Evening Worship

—6:00 p.m.

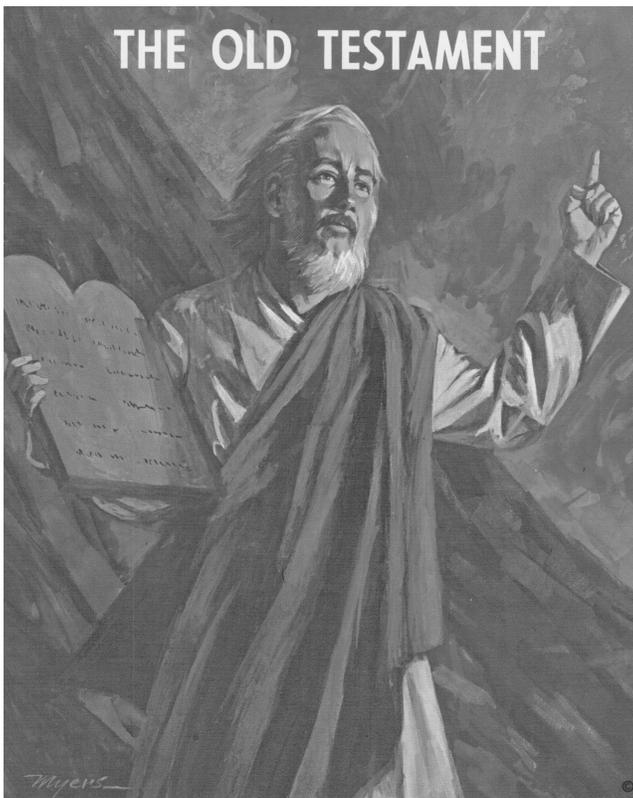
Wednesday Evening Bible Study

—7:00 p.m.

A Christ-Preaching, Bible-Teaching Church

What Does the Bible Say?

When it comes to religion, there is no shortage of opinions on the subject. In our community, there are dozens of denominations—each one teaching and practicing different things about salvation, worship and faithful living. Is every denomination right? How can they all come to different conclusions about what is written in the same Word of God? Is it God's will that there be so much confusion in religion? The Bible says that God "*is not the author of confusion*" (1 Cor. 14:33), so the problem must lie with man. Much of the confusion in the modern religious world stems from a lack of understanding of how the Bible authorizes. If we are going to preach and practice with the authority of the Lord to back us up, then we must learn to ascertain Bible authority (Col. 3:17). In the final analysis, it is what the Bible says that matters most of all—for it shall be the Word of the Lord that judges us, in the last day (John 12:48).



LESSON ONE

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BY JOHN M. HURT

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